Common Slang Terms

As in every part of the world, Americans have developed certain oddities or slang terms in their everyday language. Regardless of how long you have studied English, you will hear and see words with which you are not familiar. Listed below are some of the most common slang terms used in America.

awesome: very good, interesting, or appealing

big deal: important event; may be used sarcastically to refer to something that is not important

blast or It's going to be a blast! It's going to be a lot of fun

bomb: to be unsuccessful

blow it off: to ignore or avoid someone or something

blue or have the blues: feel depressed

bogus: 1) nonexistent, fake
2) bad, awful, unsatisfactory

to book: 1) to hurry up or do something very quickly
2) to reserve a ticket to an event or on transportation

born again: to hold strong, fundamentalist, Christian beliefs

bounce a check: to overdraw a checking account

broke: having no money

buddy: friend

bum a cigarette: to borrow a cigarette

bummed out: depressed

bummer: unpleasant experience

burned: rejected, insulted, or otherwise negatively treated

dude a fashionable man

burned out: 1) exhausted
2) dull or lifeless as a result of excessive work or drug use

busted: 1) to be caught by anyone in authority while misbehaving, or by the police while using drugs
2) to be "broke" or out of money

check out: 1) to sign out materials from a library
2) to try to find out something

check it out: to look over a situation

chill out or cool it: a command to stop what you are doing, relax

cop out: to not face the issue

couch potato: a lazy person who spends a large amount of time (perhaps on a couch) watching television

cram: To study frantically the night before a test

crash: 1) to stay overnight in someone else's dwelling, usually without notice or formal arrangement
2) to go to sleep after becoming extremely tired

cruising: Driving around for pleasure with no particular destination

to have a crush on someone: To be extremely infatuated with someone

cut it out! Stop it!

dead: 1) very tired
2) not living

dork: an unfashionable and awkward male

dorm: dormitory

dough money

down in the dumps depressed

drop in to visit unexpectedly

fire up to get excited about something; to motivate

fix up to arrange a date for a friend

fed up or sick of disgusted with; tired of

freak out to lose control of oneself

fuzzbuster device used by some motorists to determine when police are using radar to detect drivers who are speeding

geek unattractive, unstylish, socially inept person

get a kick out of someone/something find someone or something amusing or enjoyable

get on someone's case to annoy

get off someone's case to stop annoying a person

give someone a break to stop criticizing or teasing

Give me a break! Expresses disbelief

Give someone a buzz, a ring to call someone on the telephone

goofing off acting silly; doing something that has no particular purpose

give up to quit

go bananas to be so excited that one loses control of oneself

gross something crude, usually unpleasant

hang in there keep trying; do not be discouraged

hang out 1) to waste time
2) a regular meeting place for friends

hang-up fear; phobia or worry

mooch to borrow frequently and/or take things from others, usually without the intention of returning or repaying

hassle 1) a problem or inconvenience
2) cause another person to have a problem or inconvenience

head another name for the bathroom or toilet facilities

hick someone from a small town or rural area (usually uncomplimentary meaning unsophisticated)

hit the road to leave a place

hit the sack or turn in to go to bed

hitch a ride to get a ride from another person

hung up to be in conflict over a problem

ID identification card

in a nutshell very briefly and concisely

jerk person who cannot do things correctly; a mildly derogatory term

jock an athlete or athletic person, or one who is not very intelligent

john another name for the toilet or bathroom facilities; head

Knock it off! Stop doing that! Usually expressed when you are doing something annoying

Lighten up! Relax, don't be so serious

loaded someone who has had too much to drink; someone who has a lot of money

Loosen up! Relax

lose it to lose control of oneself

luck out or get lucky to have something good happen due to luck or chance

Don't mess with me! Leave me alone

Mind your own business! Do not ask questions or make statements about this matter; it is my concern and not yours

nerd a strange or socially inept person

on the house free, no cost

Oops! An exclamation used when a small mistake is made

to be open to be accepting of something or someone; to speak frankly about oneself

out of one's mind (head)
1) crazy
2) doing something ridiculous

out of it tired and not concentrating

pal friend

pig out overeat

pop, soda pop, soda, or soft drink
carbonated beverage (Coke, Pepsi, Sprite, et al)

psych up prepare oneself mentally or emotionally for something

psyched up enthusiastic

pull someone's leg to tease

put someone on to tease or try to fool

take a raincheck postpone; accept the same invitation but for a later date

raunchy vulgar, crude

relationship a close affiliation with someone; usually romantic

right-hand an important and reliable assistant

rip off 1) steal
2) anything too expensive and not worth the price

Way to go! That's very good! Sometimes used sarcastically

What's up? What's happening? What's going on?
What event is taking place?
What are you doing?

rowdy noisy, loud, obnoxious

scoop gossip, recent news

see eye-to-eye having the same opinion

show television program, movie, film, or theater performance

shush! Be quiet, don't make so much noise

slam insult a person

slob 1) a lazy, fat person
2) a person who is not dressed neatly
3) an untidy person

spaced out unable to concentrate

split to leave

stood up to be left waiting for someone who never arrives

tacky in poor taste

Take a hike! Go away and leave me alone

to be crazy about to like someone or something very much

to be into something to be very interested in or concerned with something; "I can really get into this song."

touch base verify information with someone

tough luck it's too bad that happened to you

turn over a new leaf adopt a better course of conduct

unreal unbelievable

uptight worried, tense

wimp weakling

zero in on to focus or concentrate on

zonked or zonkered completely exhausted